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ABSTRACT

The debate surrounding the effectiveness of school-uniform policies, as well as discussions concerning when and how to implement them, is rooted in anecdote. This review summarizes anecdotal literature on which the current debate is based and critically reviews the empirical literature, including theoretical underpinnings, findings, and suggestions. The anecdote-based literature relies on attitudes, personal experience, and hearsay, ignoring available research. Empirical literature includes small-scale studies of effects, such as case studies of schools that implemented mandatory school-uniform policies, and large-scale studies that compare nationally representative samples of students enrolled in schools implementing uniform policies with students enrolled in schools not implementing such policies on a variety of outcomes. Many methods used are flawed because different factors are not accounted for, such as design of uniform policies in different schools studies, and racial and socioeconomic status. Still, results of qualitative studies lay the groundwork for creating theories on uniform policy effectiveness and defining related issues requiring further research. These results will direct policymakers away from conjecture, emotion, anecdotes, and assumptions. One suggestion is that a uniform policy be part of a larger comprehensive plan that focuses on students' academic success. (Contains 31 endnotes, 14 references, and 18 resource Web sites.) (RT)

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SCHOOL UNIFORMS:
A Critical Review of the Literature

By David L. Brunsma

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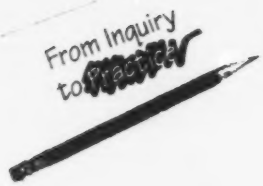

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INTRODUCTION

The debate surrounding the effectiveness of school uniform policies, as well as discussions concerning when and how to implement them, is rooted in anecdote. Many cite parents' perceptions, administrators' observations, and students' feelings, serving to keep the discussion about this reform effort on an emotional level, void of empirical evidence. Meanwhile, administrators and parents across the country struggle over whether to implement uniform policies. There is a great need for a systematic examination of the research.

The literature on school uniforms can be organized into four categories: 1) legal, 2) anecdotal, 3) empirical, and 4) theoretical.[1] In this review, I first summarize anecdotal literature on which the current debate is based. I then critically review the empirical literature, including theoretical underpinnings, findings, and suggestions.

For a discussion of some legal decisions regarding student dress codes, visit the American School Board Journal's website at www.asbj.com/2001/01/0101schoollaw.html.

ANECDOTES ARE NOT ANTIDOTES: THE PROS AND CONS OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS

The literature on school uniforms relies overwhelmingly on anecdotal evidence in the form of attitudes, personal experience, and hearsay, ignoring available research. Arguments offered for or against school uniform policies have provided the catalyst for many scholars to examine the assumptions empirically. Some conclude that the assumptions about the positive effects of uniforms say more about fundamental concern of educators, parents, students, and community members.[2]

The most prevalent arguments in favor of school uniforms are that their use prevents gang-related activity, reduces socio-economic and other physical distinctions among students, focuses students on schooling, reduces violence, instills an orderly school climate, inculcates discipline, and increases student achievement. In addition, it is assumed that uniforms diminish clothing hassles, reduce crime and theft on campus, produce school unity and pride, create a safe school environment, increase attendance, facilitate identification of intruders, and increase students' self-esteem.

Concerning the arguments against school uniforms, opponents say their use infringes upon students' rights of free speech and expression, does *not* reduce distinctions among students, represents a tool of administrative power, may produce economic hardship for a segment of the population, and does *not* reduce violence. Secondary arguments against the use of uniforms are that they do *not* reduce gang-related activity; they are another "quick fix" reform; they are based on conformity and, therefore, will stifle creativity; they are becoming tightly coupled with corporate interests; they do *not* instill discipline and order; and their use creates a false sense of security. There are numerous other arguments against uniforms that are based on speculation.

THE RESEARCH: PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Research concerning school uniform policies began in earnest about 1994, the year the first district in the country—Long Beach Unified School District—implemented a school uniform policy. The research can be categorized into three main areas: 1) studies of people's attitudes and perceptions; 2) small-scale studies of effects; and 3) large-scale studies of effects. Attitude and perception studies consist of surveys of educators, parents, and students regarding what they think about uniforms. Small-scale studies of effects typically consist of case studies of schools that have implemented mandatory school uniform policies or studies

of several schools and/or students within schools to assess the effects of uniform policies on particular outcomes. Large-scale studies of effects typically compare nationally representative samples of students enrolled in schools implementing uniform policies with students enrolled in schools not implementing uniform policies on a variety of outcomes.

Attitude studies are usually conducted to assist educators in implementing uniform policies. Studies of the effects of uniforms examine outcomes such as academic achievement, school climate, violence, discipline, attendance, safety, self-esteem, delinquency, and substance use. In what follows, I summarize studies in each category in chronological order.

Attitude and Perception Studies

The eight studies reviewed here offer a glimpse into the opinions, feelings, and observations of a number of stakeholders. It is important to remember that they do *not* measure the effectiveness of uniform policies.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals conducted a survey about school uniforms. Read about it at www.naesp.org/comm/prss31998.htm.

Zollie Stevenson and Eva Chun conducted one of the first studies, published in 1991, of people's attitudes toward voluntary uniform policies in 64 schools of the District of Columbia Public School District.[3] They surveyed all district principals and members of uniform policy committees to document their perceptions about how the policies affected attendance rates and student progress. The elementary and secondary schools in the study served primarily African-American students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Three hundred and one principals and committee members responded to the survey. Slightly more than 36% believed that having students wear uniforms would help reduce the number of fights related to clothing, and 34% believed the practice would assist students in understanding that clothes do not make the person. In a separate survey of parents, nearly 70% of the 268 who responded said the policy helped their children learn that clothes do not make the person, 46% said uniforms were more affordable clothing, and 30% said they helped their children focus on schooling. The researchers also surveyed 2,257 students in grades 5-11 at 23 schools. A majority (69%) opposed a dress code or uniform policy, and 60% said such a policy or code would not eliminate competition based on clothes. There were no statistically significant correlations between uniform policy compliance rates and academic performance or attendance.

Helen Woods and Earl Ogletree conducted a similar but smaller study in 1992 of 30 parents (15 African American, 15 Hispanic) whose children attended a Chicago area elementary public school.[4] A majority (77%) agreed that peer pressure concerning clothing was a problem and that requiring uniforms could eliminate teasing and competition among peers. Almost two-thirds of the parents (60%) did not think that requiring uniforms would alter negative interactions among students at school. The study's authors, as well as Stevenson and Chun, concur that parent support is necessary for the implementation of a uniform policy.

Dorothy Behling conducted a study in 1994 that became widely cited.[5] She investigated whether clothing style (controlling for gender and school type) influenced how high school students and teachers perceived the wearer's academic abilities, behavior, and potential. A non-random sample of 270 high school sophomores and 20 high school teachers from a single-sex, religious private school and a coeducational public high school in a middle-class, medium-sized city in Ohio participated in the study. Behling showed participants photographs of college-aged males and females wearing one of four styles of clothing: 1) dressy uniform; 2) casual uniform; 3) casual clothing; and 4) less-than-casual clothing (jeans, sweatshirt, and jean jacket combination). Participants answered items that formed three scales indicating perceptions of the models' behavior, achievement (GPA), and academic

potential. Behling found that clothing produces what she dubbed a "halo effect." Models wearing less-than-casual clothing received the most negative responses. Males in casual clothing were viewed as more likely to have behavior problems than were females in casual clothing. On the other hand, participants viewed males in uniforms as more "angelic" than females.[6] Teachers and students rated models wearing a uniform as having higher academic ability than models wearing less-than-casual clothing. Behling noted that her study was limited, because the sample was not randomly selected and respondents were given a questionnaire with forced-item responses.

David Gullatt surveyed all 66 Louisiana public school superintendents and 50 state superintendents to assess their attitudes about who is authorized to mandate dress codes or uniforms, the grade levels implicated in such policies, the procedures applied in the selection of a uniform, perceptions of the effectiveness, and whether there is discussion about faculty uniforms.[7] Roughly one-third of all state superintendents (34%) felt uniforms would improve discipline; 30% said they would lessen gang activity; 32% believed they would increase school harmony and positively affect the learning environment; about two-thirds of Louisiana superintendents agreed.

Yunhee Kim studied the attitudes of teachers, parents, and students regarding school uniforms and student self-image.[8] Survey respondents represented three high schools, one with a restrictive school uniform policy/dress code, one with a flexible school uniform policy/dress code, and one with no policy. (These descriptions illustrate the conceptual confusion between uniform policies and dress codes.) The findings indicate that parents and teachers agree more than do students that wearing uniforms eliminates competition over clothing, improves school climate, improves behavior, increases self-esteem, and increases school pride. Teachers' perceptions varied between schools regarding the effectiveness of wearing uniforms on students' attendance and homework completion. Using Offer's Self-Image Questionnaire, Kim found that school uniforms did not affect any aspects of student self-image.[9]

Charles K. West and his associates surveyed 426 parents of all fourth-grade students in Lafayette County, Mississippi, regarding the use of school uniforms in 1999.[10] The response rate was 33.8%. (The researchers chose to survey parents of fourth-graders because they said clothing and appearance become more salient for children at this age.) More than one-half of the parents (56%) said they favored or strongly favored the use of school uniforms in public schools. A majority of parents agreed that uniforms eliminate cultural expression through dress, eliminate visible socio-economic differences, cost less than other types of clothing, do not violate a child's rights under the law, and do not limit a child's creativity or individuality. The authors also found that family income influences perception of the cost of uniforms compared to other types of clothing. That is, as family income decreased, parents thought that uniforms would cost more than other types of clothing, and parents with higher incomes perceived that uniforms would cost less than other types of clothing.

Todd DeMitchell, Richard Fossey, and Casey Cobb surveyed a random sample of elementary, middle, and secondary principals nationwide regarding the level of support for mandatory school uniforms.[11] Principals' levels of support for dress code policies and mandatory school uniform policies varied by school level. High school principals favored strict dress codes more than did middle or elementary school principals. Middle school principals favored mandatory uniform policies more than did elementary or high school principals. The authors did not offer any interpretations as to why principals varied in their level of support.

Finally, Lands End, a clothing company, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) joined together for a nationwide telephone survey of 755 princi-

Principals nationwide took part in a survey that asked questions related to school uniforms and strict dress codes. Find a report of the survey results at www.naesp.org/misc/uniforms.htm.

pals in 2000.[12] More than two-thirds of the principals surveyed (84%) said uniforms appear to improve a school's image in the community; 79% believed they improve classroom discipline; 76% felt they decrease peer pressure; 72% said uniforms increase school spirit; 67% said they allow students to concentrate on schoolwork; and 62% believed they improve students' safety at school. When asked how they gauge the effects of a school uniform policy, 88% said they used observations by the principal and staff; 78% referred to parents' comments; 76% used teachers' or school staffs' comments; 62% referred to students' comments; 57% examined discipline logs; and 47% looked at attendance records.

What attitude studies do provide are a description of the ideology and the level of support for school uniform policies. But reliance on the results of attitude studies as evidence for the effectiveness of uniform policies masks real problems of public schools.

Small-Scale Studies of Effects

The six studies I review here move beyond attitude studies because the researchers used quantitative and qualitative measures to test whether uniforms influence issues of concern to educators and parents. These researchers utilized small samples, employed experimental designs (with experimental and control groups), and attempted to control for other factors associated with the outcomes of interest.

One such study comes to us from Japan. Ichiro Tanioka and Daniel Glaser's empirical test of three important theoretical models of delinquency brought them unknowingly into the debate on school uniforms.[13] Their study examined the effect of uniforms on delinquent behavior (vandalism, theft, burglary, and "joy riding") among more than 1,000 Japanese youth in Osaka private and public schools. They found that "[t]he uniform, by creating identifiability as a student and a juvenile, seems to inhibit delinquency, but those most motivated to offend carry a change of clothing in a bag or find other ways to be free of their uniforms before reaching home."[14] Their conclusions hearken a clear word of warning:

> This finding on identifiability of potential offenders as preventing delinquency in Japan merits testing in other nations where uniforms are worn, such as some private schools in the U.S.; however, its facilitation of informal control of students may not be so effective in countries lacking Japan's widespread volunteer family, school, and police informants that are capable guardians of crime and intimate handlers of juveniles.[15]

One of the key assumptions of proponents of school uniform policies is that uniforms create a more positive school climate that, in turn, positively affects virtually every aspect of schooling. Richard Murray, a high school principal in South Carolina, set out to test this assumption.[16] Using the National Association of Secondary School Principal's Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments (CASE) School Climate Survey, Murray surveyed 306 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students: 153 randomly selected from an urban middle school with a school uniform policy and 153 from an urban middle school without a uniform policy.[17] He assumed that the schools were similar in terms of racial composition and socio-economic status, so he did not control for these factors. (Murray did not indicate if the uniform policies in the two schools were identical.) Murray provided no evidence in his study that uniforms affect school climate. Although his study was methodologically flawed (he did not include measures in his data analyses to account for the effects of racial and socio-economic factors), Murray's study is the only one that has attempted to address the relationship between school uniform policies and school climate. Thus, the

To read about a study on school violence prevention, including the effects of school uniforms, visit the website at www.rppi.org/education/ps234.html.

question of if and how school uniform policies affect school climate remains salient and open to more rigorous investigation.

The importance of sampling procedures, that is, how participants in a study are selected, sample size, and the validity and reliability of the measurements used in assessing the effectiveness of school uniform policies on student outcomes cannot be overstated. However, a case study, where a researcher examines one school in depth, often can illuminate more clearly the fundamental processes at work in any social phenomenon. Oftentimes, qualitative research helps build theory and illuminates important research questions for large-scale quantitative studies.

Carolyn Williams-Davidson's case study does just this.[18] She investigated the processes and problems surrounding the implementation of a voluntary student uniform policy in an urban elementary school. Though she found no effects of uniforms that could not be traced to procedural, curricular, policy, or other changes occurring at the school, Williams-Davidson identified factors motivating school uniform policies, including politics and fear. She found that people's views about the effects of school uniforms depended on whether they were proponents or opponents of the policy. Williams-Davidson argues that such policies highlight larger issues of the struggle between adults and students over change, control, and the meaning of education. Her ideas, tested on a larger sample, may provide a more complete understanding of the effects of uniform policies.

Should all elementary schools require students to wear uniforms? The website at danenet.wicip.org/ncs/forumuniformseval.htm provides the case both for and against the idea.

Mary Louise Murphy's case study of an elementary school that implemented a uniform policy examined discipline referrals, academic achievement on standardized tests, and attitudes of students, parents, and staff.[19] While students' standardized test scores did increase after the policy was implemented, Murphy attributed this increase to the school's academic program, which was in its second year, and test preparation practices. Behavioral referrals decreased after the school uniform policy was established, but Murphy speculates that the decline was more likely due to a newly implemented schoolwide problem-solving curriculum. Murphy's case study, though not generalizeable to other elementary school contexts, does provide rich descriptions of the processes involved in implementing a school uniform policy and direction regarding how researchers need to develop models that mirror the complexity of schooling.

In another small-scale study, Nancy Bruggemann Gregory investigated the effects of school uniform policies on students' self-esteem, academic achievement, and attendance rates in two demographically similar inner-city schools.[20] The schools enrolled 165 and 170 students respectively; one school had a uniform policy, while the other did not. Using the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, which included four dimensions of self-esteem, Gregory found that students who attended the school with the uniform policy had somewhat higher academic self-esteem (one's self-evaluation as a student) than did students who attended the school without a uniform policy.[21] There was no relationship between wearing uniforms and the other three dimensions of self-esteem, i.e., home parent self-esteem (one's self-evaluation as a family member), and social self-peer esteem (one's self-evaluation as a friend). Gregory also found a strong positive relationship between wearing uniforms and increased attendance rates (as reported by students). In addition, she found significant differences between the two groups for achievement in math and language arts, with uniformed students achieving higher than did non-uniformed students.

Henry L. Stevenson investigated the effect of school uniform policies in 21 Texas public middle schools and seven public high schools on student attendance, suspensions, expulsions, and incidences of disciplinary action, weapons possession, assault and battery, vandalism, fights, and school crime.[22] The student population was largely minority (the only descriptive

statistic provided was that the student population was 10.6% white), and Stevenson did not control for demographic variables in the study. Using basic t-tests, he found that the number of incidents of disciplinary action actually increased about 12%. Stevenson found that uniforms had no effect on the number of suspensions or incidences of fights, weapons possession, assault and battery, vandalism, or school crime.

There was an increase in attendance rates (.63%) and a statistically significant drop in the percentage of expulsions from 8.64% to 6.71% from the 1995-1996 school year to the 1997-1998 school year. However, the researchers did not control for school characteristics or methods of recording student behavior among sample schools, so it is unclear if the slight increase in student attendance and the slight decrease in expulsions were due to the presence of uniforms or some other variables.

As a whole, these small-scale studies have propelled research on the effectiveness of school uniforms, and they have contributed to our understanding of the processes involved in implementing uniform policies. Overall, they lack rigorous statistical controls and methodologies, making many of the studies unreliable evidence that uniforms are effective as a reform effort. These studies, especially the case studies, do offer unique insights into the processes and political conflicts surrounding uniform policies.

Large-Scale Studies of Effects

Attempting to remedy many of the methodological, statistical, and logical flaws in attitude and small-scale effectiveness studies, several researchers have analyzed the effects of uniforms with much larger samples, more control variables, and more sophisticated statistics.[23] To date, these large-scale studies represent the cutting edge of valid empirical research into the effects of school uniforms on selected outcomes. Like small-scale studies, however, they also have methodological and design problems that need to be addressed.

The most frequently cited large-scale study is that of the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), the first district in the United States to mandate school uniforms for *all* elementary and middle school students within its jurisdiction.[24] For some time, this was the only source of data regarding the effects of a school uniform policy on certain variables, such as attendance rates and school climate. Sue Stanley was the first to analyze data on several behavioral and disciplinary outcomes, such as class disruptions, dress code violations, violence on the playground, and suspensions, that were collected by the district from the 1993-94 school year through the 1994-95 school year.[25] The now classic findings indicated that suspensions in elementary schools declined by 28% and in middle school by 36%. The percentage of school crimes *reported* in kindergarten through eighth-grade also decreased: assault and battery by 34%, assault with a deadly weapon by 50%, fighting by 51%, sex offenses by 74%, and vandalism by 18%.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals offers background information on public school uniforms at www.naesp.org/misc/uniformsbg.htm.

Proponents of school uniform policies used Stanley's research to support their position, even though Stanley urged caution in interpreting the data, noting that "it is not clear that these results are entirely attributable to the uniform policy."[26] Because other changes were occurring in the schools at the same time that the mandatory uniform policy was implemented, it is unclear whether decreases in the number of suspensions and school crimes were due to the uniform policy, other changes, or simply chance. Furthermore, while many wished to use these findings to generalize to their specific school district or their particular school, the results were not as generalizable as subsequent large-scale effectiveness studies would be.

The Long Beach Study has been thoroughly criticized elsewhere.[27] However, in terms of large-scale effectiveness studies, researchers finally had a data set to compare and correlate

over time. Stanley's research pushed the boundaries of what had been done previously, raised new questions, and forced researchers to refocus their energies on more rigorous multivariate predictive models in order to assess the effectiveness of school uniform policies.

David Brunsma and Kerry Rockquemore attempted to introduce methodological rigor into their study of the effectiveness of school uniforms by using a nationally representative sample of tenth-graders and multivariate regression models.[28] At the time (1998), the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) was the only nationally representative secondary data set that assembled information on school policies, school structure and climate, student achievement, behavior, and attendance. The proponents' claims formed the hypotheses to be tested, and we set out to examine empirically whether the achievement levels and selected behaviors of students who wear uniforms are statistically different from students who do not wear uniforms. We also investigated whether uniforms affect both students' and their peers' attitudes toward school and students' academic preparedness. We found no significant differences in the levels of absenteeism, behavioral problems (e.g., fights and suspensions), or substance use on campus between the two groups. We also found no effects of uniform policies on academic preparedness or student and peer attitudes toward school. We found a significant, albeit weak, *negative* effect of uniforms on academic achievement.

Find the full text of the Brunsma and Rockquemore study at the website members.tripod.com/rockqu/uniform.htm.

Echoing Sue Stanley's concerns, we noted in our original report that "[i]nstituting a uniform policy can be viewed as analogous to cleaning and brightly painting a deteriorating building in that, on the one hand it grabs our immediate attention, and, on the other hand, it is only a coat of paint."[29] We advocate for a more serious examination of not only school reform efforts, but also social and cultural issues that reflect the real concerns of school officials, parents, and teachers.

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) published a study that examined the numerous proposals, strategies, and policies aimed at dealing with the problem of disorder and violence in our public schools.[30] Using the eighth- through twelfth-grade NELS:88 data, ETS researchers analyzed the effectiveness of several approaches to dealing with disorder, including zero-tolerance policies, smaller schools, heightened security at the school, violence prevention programs, and school uniform policies. Noting that not all prevention measures are represented in the data set nor are dropouts included and that more appropriate multilevel regression techniques are necessary to precisely quantify the effects, the researchers found that students in schools that required school uniforms did not differ significantly on dependent measures of delinquency (drug use, non-serious infractions, and serious infractions) from students in schools that did *not* require uniforms. These results are consistent with our findings.

These latter two studies introduce multivariate statistical analyses, statistical controls, longitudinal analyses, and more representative samples that are necessary to increase our understanding of school uniform policies and their effects on educational outcomes for the general population of children attending schools. These studies found no evidence that uniforms affect student achievement or behaviors such as attendance or substance use.

CONCLUSION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

In his 1996 State of the Union Address, President Bill Clinton urged public schools to consider mandating school uniforms in order to reduce gang violence. While no empirical research existed to warrant the president's initiative, many believed and still do that school uniform policies merit consideration as a viable reform strategy. Results of the seven attitude surveys reviewed earlier provide evidence of the positive attitudes many parents, teachers, and administrators have about uniform policies.

As I noted earlier, parents surveyed in the District of Columbia Public School District felt that uniforms would save on clothing expenses, teach their children that clothing is not important, and better focus their children on schooling. Parents of students attending a Chicago area elementary school said uniforms could eliminate teasing and competition among peers. A majority of parents of fourth-graders attending a Mississippi elementary school said they favored school uniforms. Teachers and parents of students in three Minnesota public high schools agreed that uniforms eliminate competition over clothing, improve school climate, improve behavior, increase self-esteem, and increase school pride.

Principals and teachers surveyed in the District of Columbia Public School District believed uniforms would improve overall student behavior and the school climate. Roughly one-third of 50 state superintendents and two-thirds of 66 Louisiana public school superintendents surveyed said uniforms would improve discipline, reduce gang activity, increase school harmony, and positively affect the learning environment. A national telephone survey of 755 principals indicated that more than two-thirds believed uniforms improve a school's image in the community, improve classroom discipline, decrease peer pressure, increase school spirit, enable students to concentrate on schoolwork, and improve school safety.

What emerges from this review of the literature is a picture far different from that presented to countless school boards, educators, parents, students, and community members. Even if we discount the serious validity problems of attitude studies and the inadequate or nonexistent controls and lack of generalizability of small-scale effectiveness studies, school uniforms do not appear to have any effect on the variables identified in anecdotal literature. However, it is clear that a great deal more research is needed.

Do you support mandatory school uniforms? Consider some of the pros and cons, listed at the website www.smarterkids.com/rescenter/calendar/cal_activity.asp?activity=1298.

There is also a need to look into several other issues in these analyses: 1) what are the differential effects of uniforms on girls as opposed to boys; 2) what are the differential effects of the different types of uniform policies on all previously analyzed issues; 3) what are the unique processes and effects of uniforms at different levels of schooling; 4) what are the community and school-level factors that predict which schools choose to implement which types of policies; 5) how do uniforms interact with other reform strategies to affect change in public schools; 6) what factors lead schools that have adopted a policy to eventually drop that policy and what are the aftereffects of such changes; 7) what is the empirical link between corporate marketing, school funding, and uniform policy adoptions; and 8) what is the effect of uniform policies on school climate using methodologically sound approaches and valid measures of school climate.

As I noted earlier, anecdotes about the effectiveness of school uniforms have provided researchers with outcomes to study empirically. These anecdotes also highlight some of the important concerns about schooling that are shared by parents and educators. One of these, school violence, has not been affected by the presence of school uniforms, in spite of all the anecdotal evidence. In the large-scale study conducted by the ETS, researchers identified two other factors that *do* affect disorder at school: 1) enforcement of severe punishments for

violations, and 2) limiting student movement during the school day through a set of security procedures.

Mary Louise Murphy concluded from her case study cited earlier that it is important for a uniform policy to be a part of a larger comprehensive plan to focus on the academic success of all children by providing:

- A strong curriculum that meets the needs of all students;
- A looping model, where students spend two years with the same teacher, providing more efficient use of time for academic instruction;
- Effective instruction delivered by a staff that works together to maintain high academic and behavioral standards for all children;
- Staff development that provides opportunity for continued education and professional growth;
- A counseling program that coordinates community resources and social services to assist children and families in need;
- An efficient, well-managed, secure facility with rules and procedures that provide the best environment for learning;
- Instructional support that coordinates parent and community involvement;
- A building decision-making process that facilitates communication and incorporates input and decision making from those who are [affected] by the results of the decision.[31]

Rigorous and methodical study will direct policymakers away from conjecture, emotion, anecdotes, and assumptions. The ever-increasing adoption and implementation of school uniform policies in the face of scarce empirical evidence indicates a need for decision makers to better understand the motivations behind such reform efforts. Are decisions regarding school uniform policies fueled by irrational fears about school violence and overcrowded schools? Our understanding of these issues and the decisions we make to solve them must be grounded in research that is critical, thorough, and dedicated to uncovering those processes and policies that work for particular sets of social and structural conditions.

Visit the website at www.aclu.org/congress/uniform.html to read the American Civil Liberties Union's point of view on school uniforms.

ENDNOTES

1. There is not enough space here to summarize the literature regarding the legal aspects of school uniforms. Interested readers should consult DeMitchell, Fossey, and Cobb, 2000; Gilbert, 1999; Kuhn, 1996; Lane et al., 1994.
2. Susan Black, "Forever Plaid?" *American School Board Journal* 185, no. 11 (1998): 42-45; William F. Buckley Jr., "School Uniforms?!" *National Review* 48, no. 3 (1996): 71; Gloria Chaika, "School Uniforms: Panacea or Band Aid?" *Education World* (September 1999) retrieved on 27 September 2001 from the website of Education World at www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin130.shtml; Mary Louise Murphy, "Public School Uniforms: A Case Study of One School's Experience" (Ph.D. diss. University of Washington, 1997), abstract in *Dissertation Abstracts International* 58, no. 12-A (1997): 4561; Kathleen L. Paliokas, Mary Hatwood Futrell, and Ray C. Rist, "Trying Uniforms on for Size," *American School Board Journal* 183, no. 5 (1996): 32-35; Alexander Volokh and Lisa Snell, "School Violence Prevention: Strategies to Keep Schools Safe (Unabridged)," *Policy Study*, No. 234 (October 1997) retrieved on 27 September 2001 from the website of Reason Public Policy Institute at www.rppi.org/education/ps234.html; Julia Wilkins, "School Uniforms: The Answer to Violence in American Schools or a Cheap Educational Reform?" *Humanist* 59, no. 2 (1999): 19; Carolyn M. Williams-Davidson, "Case Study of the Mandatory Enforcement of a Voluntary Student Uniform Policy" (Ph.D. diss Arizona State University, 1996), abstract in *Dissertation Abstracts International* 57, no. 10-A (1997): 4199.

3. Zollie Stevenson Jr. and Eva Wells Chunn, *Uniform Policy/Dress Codes: School Staff and Parent Perceptions of Need and Impact* (Washington, D.C.: District of Columbia Public Schools, 1991), ERIC, ED 331933.
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